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**Binks et al.**

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(54) **INLET SECTION OF AN AIRCRAFT ENGINE**  
**NACELLE**

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See application file for complete search history.

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continuation of application No. 12/423,550, filed on  
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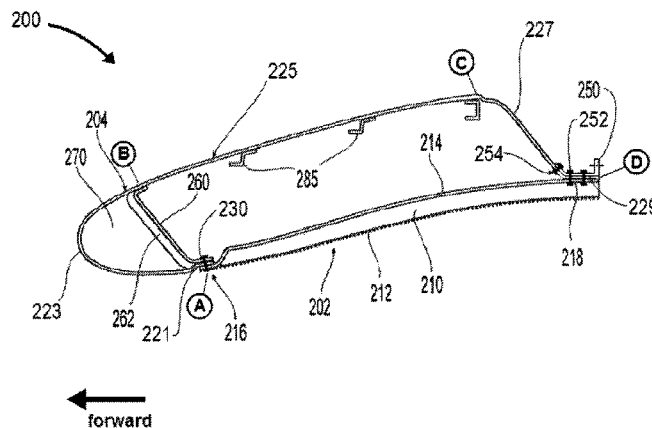
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**ABSTRACT**

A nacelle inlet for an aircraft engine of a type having an engine fan case with a forward flange includes an acoustic inner barrel having a forward edge and an aft edge, an outer shell having a nose lip portion with a trailing inner edge, and an outer barrel portion having an aft portion. The nacelle inlet also includes an aft attachment flange configured to attach the inlet to the forward flange of the engine fan case, and an aft bulkhead having an aft end and connecting the outer barrel portion of the outer shell to the aft attachment flange. The forward edge of the acoustic inner barrel is connected to the trailing inner edge of the nose lip portion, and the aft portion of the inner barrel is attached to the aft attachment flange.

**13 Claims, 12 Drawing Sheets**



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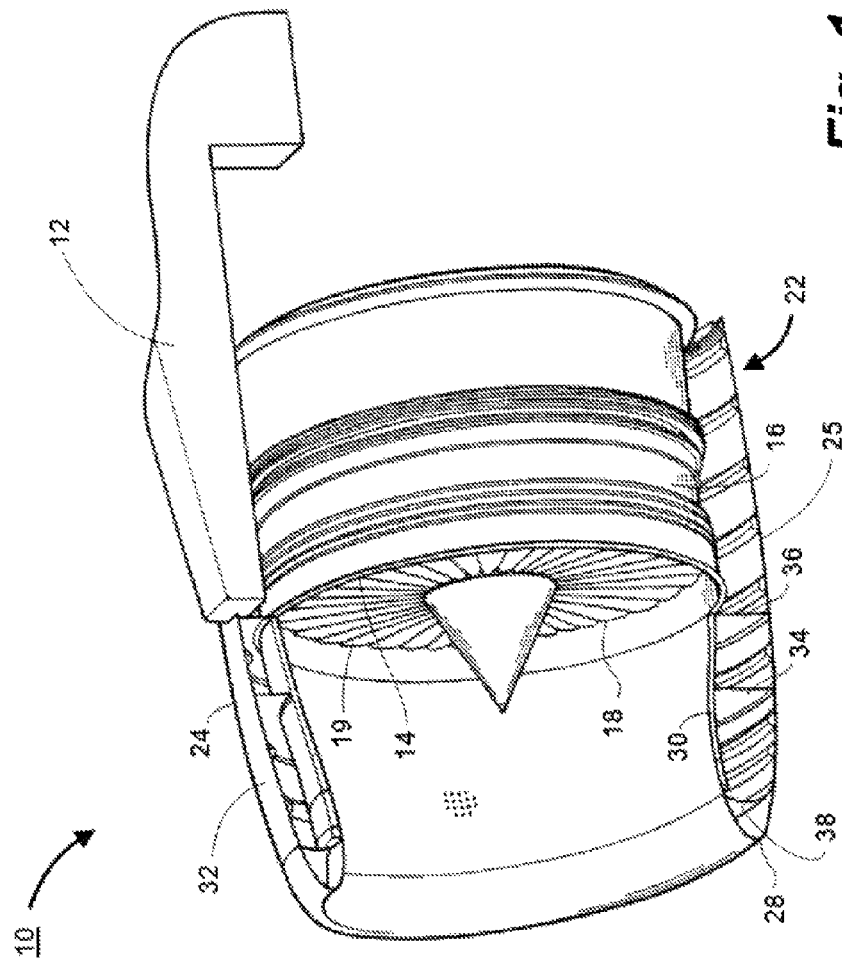
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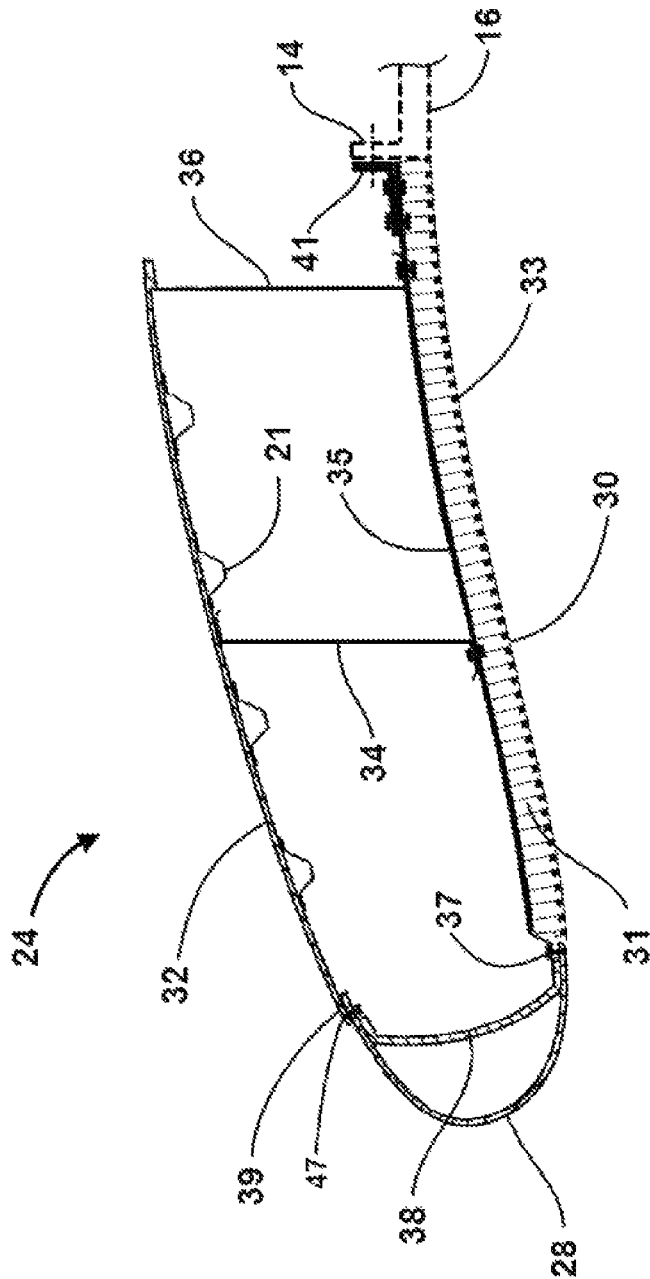
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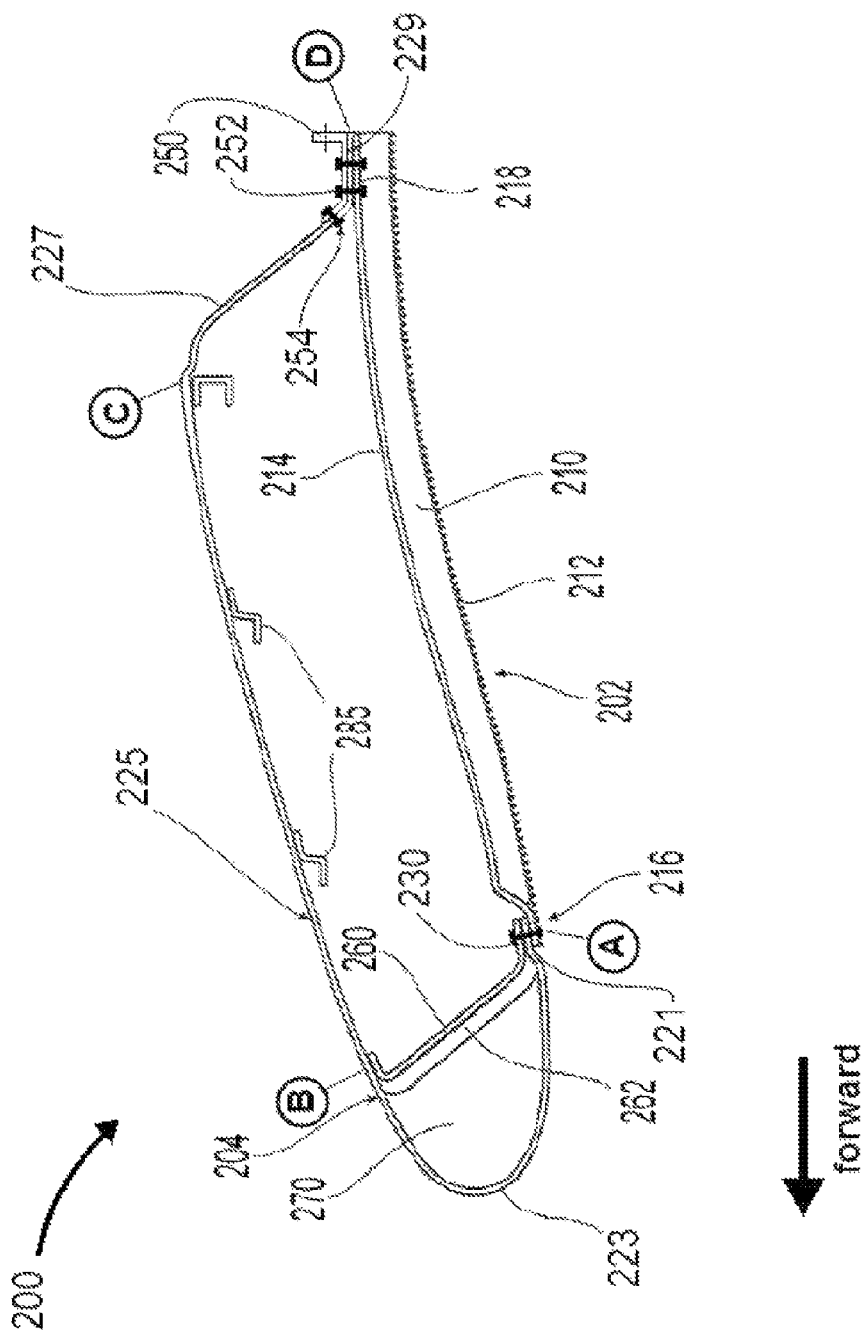
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**Fig. 1A**  
(prior art)



**Fig. 1B**  
**(prior art)**



201

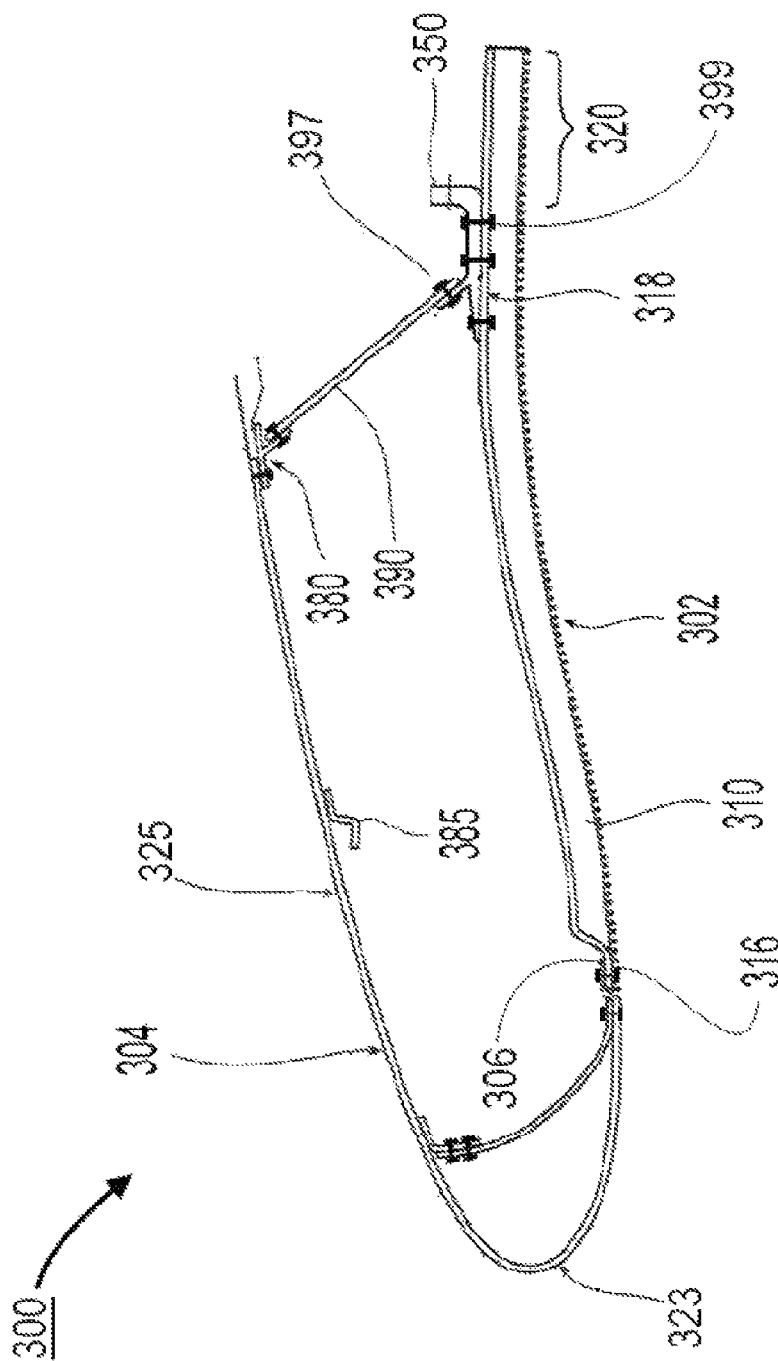
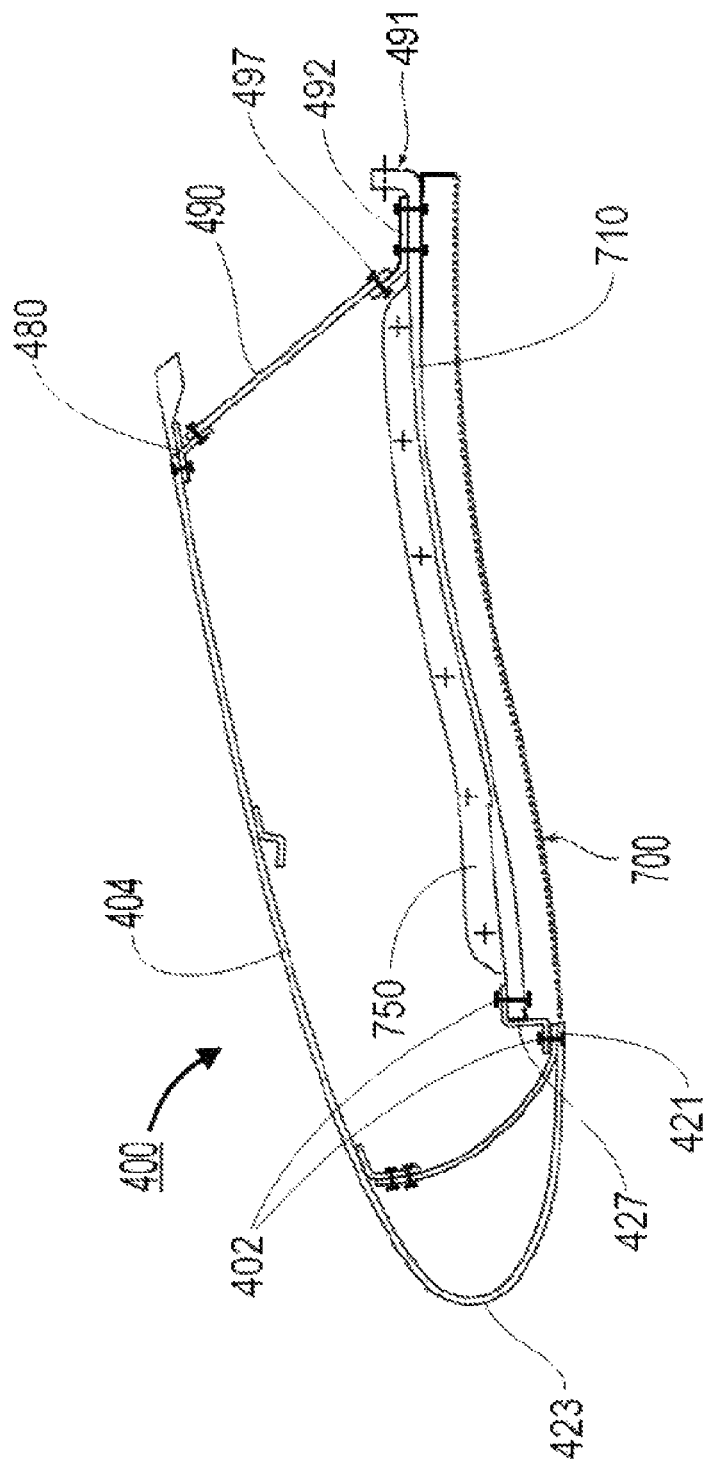
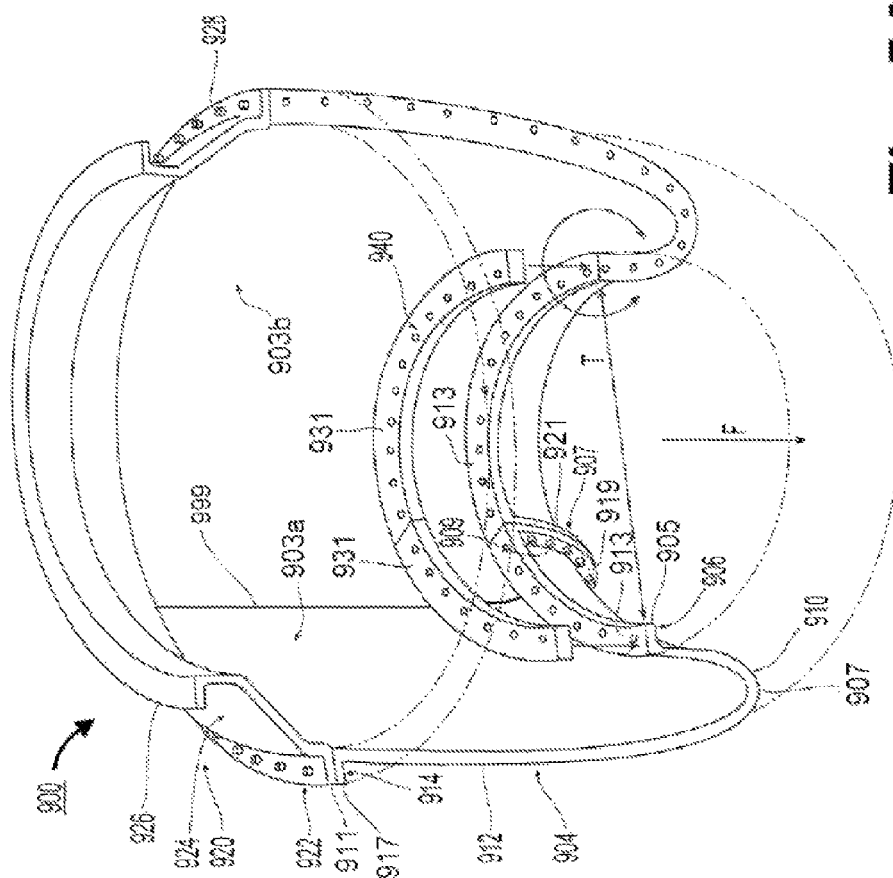


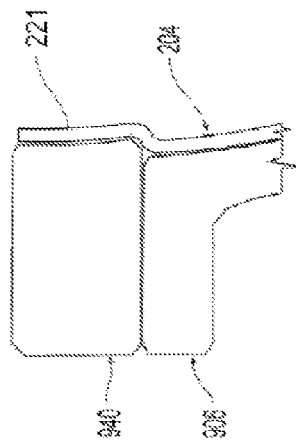
Fig. 3



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**Fig. 5A**



**Fig. 5B**



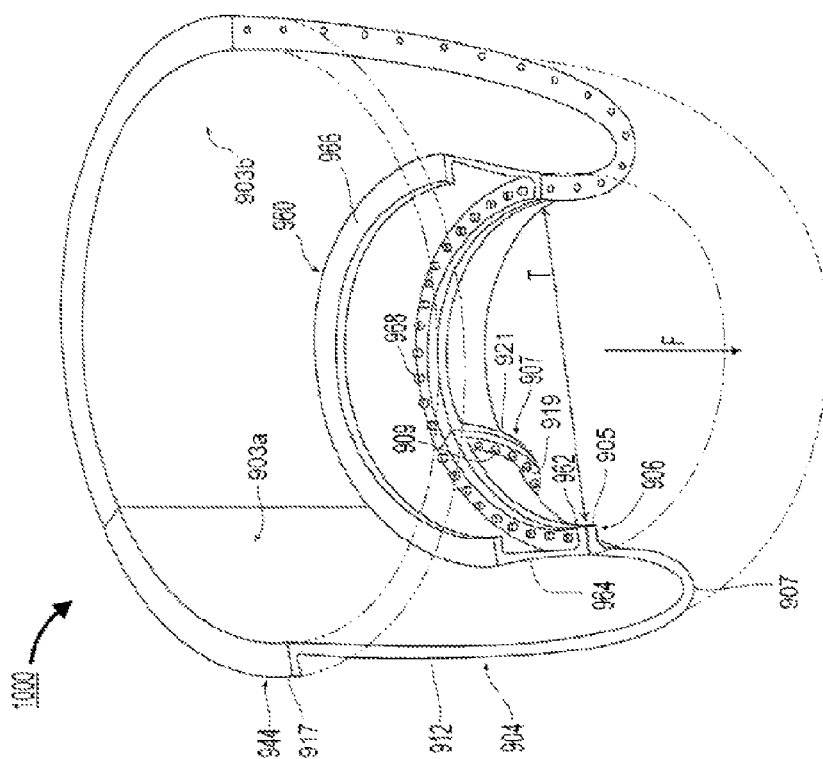
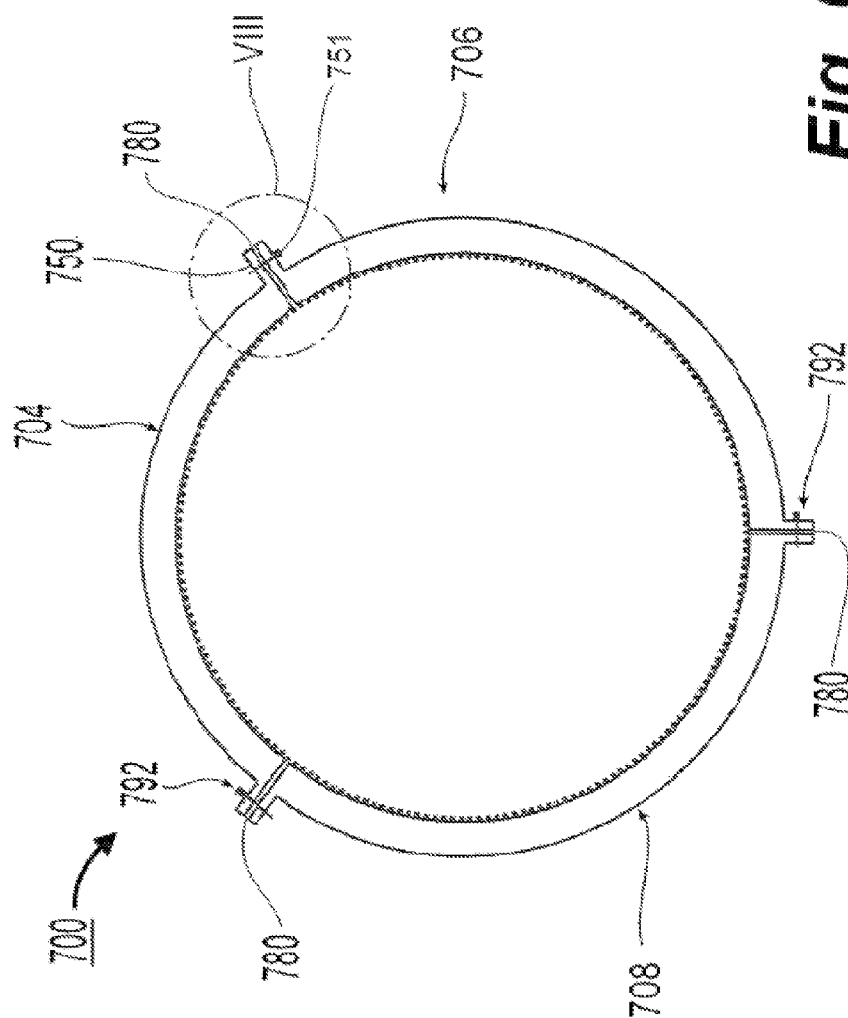
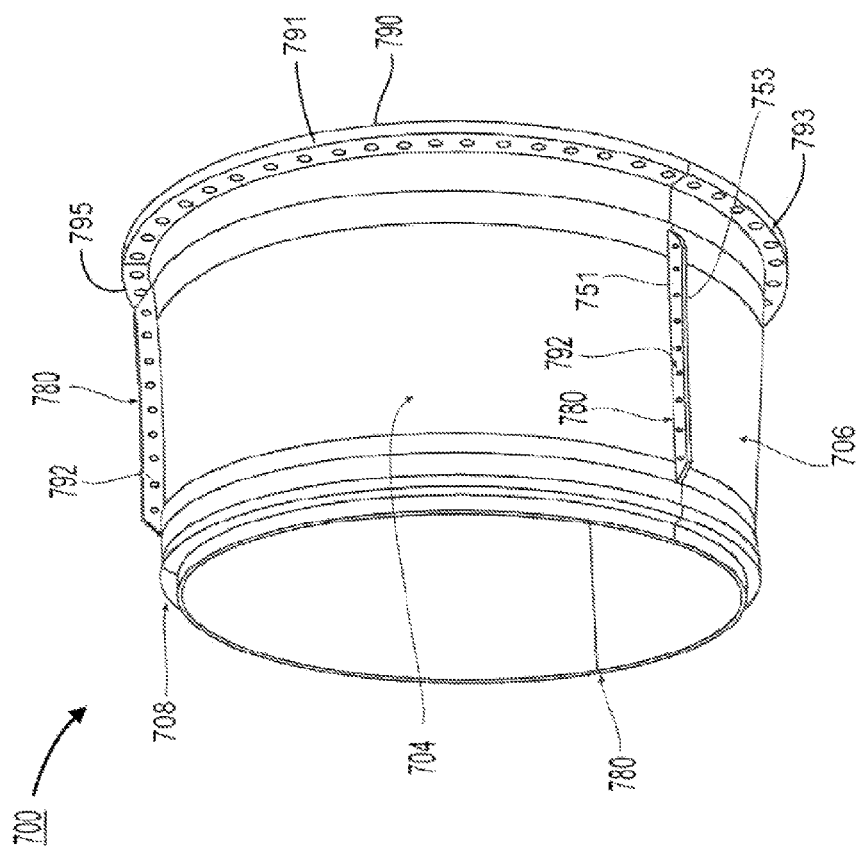


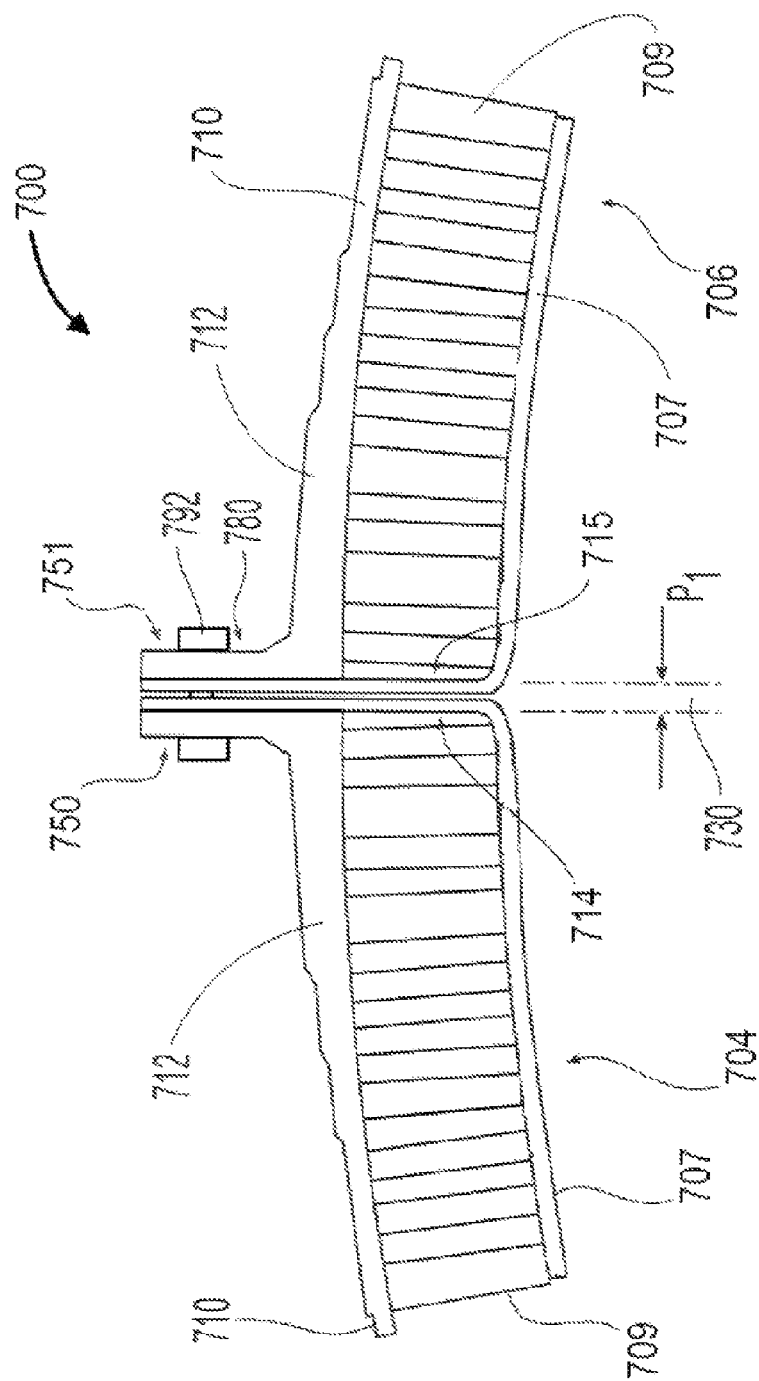
Fig. 5C



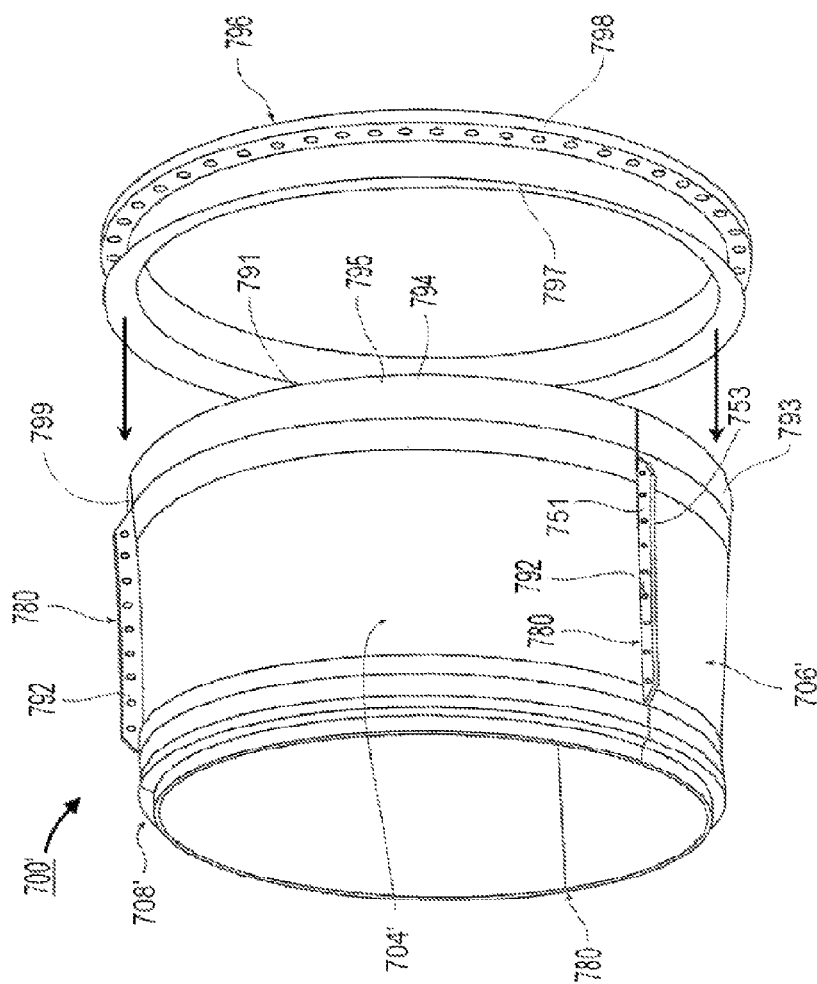
**Fig. 6**



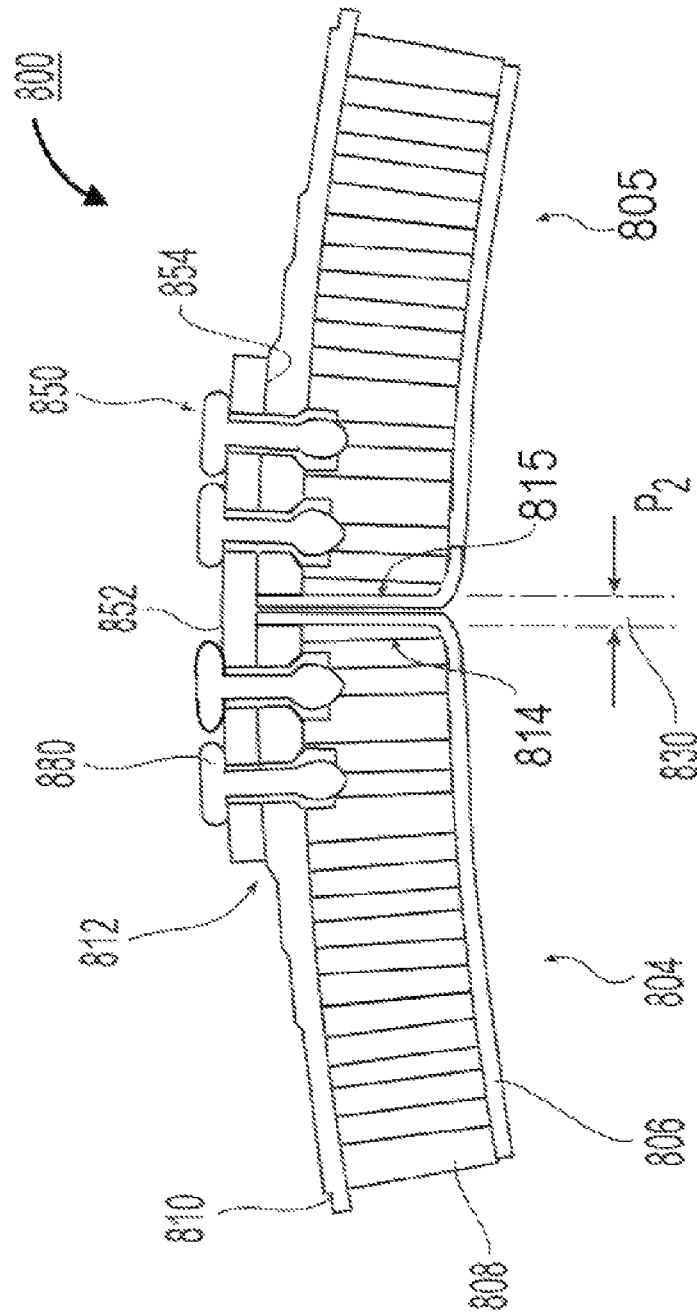
**Fig. 7**



**Fig. 8**



**Fig. 9**



**Fig. 10**

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# INLET SECTION OF AN AIRCRAFT ENGINE NACELLE

## CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of co-pending U.S. application No. 13/091,615, filed Apr. 21, 2011, which is a continuation of U.S. application No. 12/423,550, filed Apr. 14, 2009, now issued as U.S. Pat. No. 8,197,191 on Jun. 12, 2012, each of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

### 1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to nacelles for aircraft engines, and more particularly relates to an improved nacelle for a turbofan engine having an inlet cowl that is designed to assist in achieving a stable fly-home configuration subsequent to a blade-out event.

### 2. Description of the Related Art

A nacelle for a turbofan engine must meet several basic design criteria. For example, the nacelle should direct air flow to the air intake of the engine while protecting the air flow from disturbances such as gusts, and the like. In addition, the exterior surface profile of the nacelle should minimize the aerodynamic drag caused by the engine and its related components.

As shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B, a modern turbofan engine assembly 10 typically includes a nacelle 22 and a fan case 16. The engine assembly, including the nacelle 22 and fan case 16, can be suspended from an aircraft's wing by a pylon 12. In FIG. 1A, one side of the nacelle structure 22 is removed for ease of illustration. The fan case 16 surrounds the engine's fan 18. The fan 18 includes a plurality of fan blades 19 attached to the engine's rotor. As shown in FIG. 1A, a typical nacelle structure 22 includes a forward inlet portion 24 and an aft nacelle portion 25. The inlet portion 24 is typically attached to a forward flange 14 on the fan case 16 by a plurality of circumferentially spaced fasteners, such as bolts or the like. As shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B, the inlet portion 24 typically includes an outer barrel 32, a rounded nose lip section 28, an inner barrel 30, and one or more spaced bulkheads 34, 36 disposed between the outer barrel 32 and the inner barrel portion 30. The outer barrel portion 32 and nose lip portion 28 can be constructed of a thin metallic material, such as aluminum, for example, or can be constructed of composite materials. The inner barrel 30 typically is constructed of composite materials and includes acoustic treatment configured to attenuate at least some engine noise. Such an acoustically treated inner barrel 30 typically includes a honeycomb core 31 sandwiched between a perforated composite inner skin 33 and an imperforate composite outer skin 35. The composite inner barrel 30 can be constructed in two or more circumferential segments joined together by fasteners, or can be an unsegmented, one-piece composite structure. Some advantages of a one-piece inner barrel 30 over a segmented inner barrel 30 include fewer parts and fasteners, a seamless aerodynamic inner surface, and lower manufacturing costs, for example.

A forward edge 39 of the outer barrel 32 can be connected to the nose lip portion 28 by a first plurality of circumferentially spaced fasteners 47, such as rivets, or the like. Similarly, a forward edge of inner barrel 30 can be connected to the nose lip portion 28 by a second plurality of circumferentially spaced fasteners 37, such as rivets, bolts, or the like. The

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fasteners 37, 47 secure the components of the inlet portion 24 together, and transmit loads between fastened components. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1B, a forward bulkhead 38 extends between the outer and inner walls of the nose lip 28, and an intermediate bulkhead 34 and an aft bulkhead 36 connect portions of the outer barrel 32 and the inner barrel 30. The bulkheads 34, 36 contribute to the rigidity and strength of the inlet portion 24. In addition, the intermediate and aft bulkheads 34, 36 transmit loads between the inner barrel 30 and the outer barrel 32. As shown in FIG. 1B, an aft flange 41 on the inner barrel 30 can connect the inlet portion 24 to a forward flange 14 of a fan case 16. Accordingly, the composite inner barrel 30 directly supports the outer barrel 32 and nose lip portion 28. The weight of the inlet portion 24 and external loads borne by the inlet portion 24 are necessarily transferred to the fan case 16 through the inner barrel 30. Therefore, the composite inner barrel 30 of a typical nacelle inlet 24 can substantially contribute to the overall rigidity, strength and stability of the inlet portion 24 of the nacelle 22.

The bulkheads 34, 36, 38 shown in FIG. 1B typically are constructed of a thin metallic material such as aluminum, for example. The bulkheads 34, 36, 38 can be welded to the metallic outer barrel 32 and metallic nose lip portion 28, or can be connected to the outer barrel 32 and/or nose lip portion 28 by mechanical fasteners, such as rivets, or the like. The aft bulkhead 36 and intermediate bulkhead 34 can be fastened to the composite inner barrel 30 by mechanical fasteners such as rivets, bolts, or the like. As shown in FIG. 1B, one or more circumferentially extending reinforcement ribs 21 can be welded or otherwise attached along the inner surface of the outer barrel 32 to stiffen the thin metal skin and maintain an aerodynamic shape.

As discussed below, a typical nacelle structure like that shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B and described above can be improved. U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations set forth numerous design objectives for aircraft. For example, the structural integrity of an aircraft engine nacelle should be sufficient to permit an associated aircraft to be safely flown and landed following a blade-out event. More specifically, a nacelle 22 should maintain a stable and aerodynamic configuration that will not impede the fly-home capability of an aircraft following a blade-out event. As is known in the art, a "blade out event" arises when a blade is accidentally released from a turbine's rotor, such as when a first-stage fan blade 19 is accidentally released from a rotor of a high-bypass turbofan engine 10. When suddenly released during flight, a fan blade 19 can impact a surrounding fan case 16 with substantial force, and resulting loads on the fan case 16 can be transferred to surrounding structures, such as to the inlet portion 24 of a surrounding nacelle 22. These loads can cause substantial damage to the nacelle inlet 24, including damage to an adjoined inner barrel 30. In addition or alternatively, a released fan blade 19 can directly impact a portion of an adjacent inner barrel 30, thereby causing direct damage to the inner barrel 30. Because the inner barrel 30 directly supports the inlet portion 24 on the fan case 16, including the outer barrel 32 and nose lip portion 28, damage to the inner barrel 30 can compromise the structural integrity and stability of the nacelle inlet 24, and may negatively affect the fly-home capability of an aircraft.

A blade-out event also causes the rotational balance of an engine's fan 18 to be lost. After a damaged engine 10 is shut down following a blade-out event, airflow impinging on the unbalanced fan 18 can cause the fan 18 to rapidly spin or "windmill." Such wind-milling of an unbalanced fan 18 can exert substantial vibrational loads on the engine 10 and fan case 16, and at least some of these loads can be transmitted to

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an attached inlet portion **24** and inner barrel **30** of the nacelle **22**. In addition, following a blade-out event, aerodynamic forces and a suction created by a windmilling fan **18** can exert substantial loads on a damaged inlet portion **24** of the nacelle **22**. Such loads can cause substantial deformation of a damaged inlet portion **24** and can result in unwanted aerodynamic drag.

Such loads also can cause cracks or breaks in a damaged composite inner barrel **30** to propagate, further compromising the structural integrity and stability of a damaged inlet portion **24** of a nacelle **22**. Without crack-stopping longitudinal joints or reinforced flanges between adjoined circumferential segments of an inner barrel **30**, such crack propagation can be more severe in a one-piece inner barrel than in a segmented inner barrel.

As discussed above, the inner barrel **30** of a typical nacelle inlet **24** substantially contributes to the overall strength and rigidity of nacelle inlet's structure. Accordingly, when the inner barrel **30** of an inlet portion **24** of a nacelle is substantially damaged subsequent to a blade-out event, the structural integrity and rigidity of a nacelle's inlet portion **24** may not be sufficient to adequately withstand such suction and/or aerodynamic loads, or to maintain a stable and aerodynamic configuration of the nacelle inlet **24** that is sufficient to support the fly-home capability of an aircraft.

Accordingly, there is a need for a nacelle structure for a turbofan aircraft engine that is capable of maintaining a substantially stable and aerodynamic configuration subsequent to a blade-out event, and which thereby supports an aircraft's fly home capability following such an incident. In particular, there is a need for a nacelle inlet structure for a high-bypass turbofan aircraft engine that maintains its structural integrity and a stable aerodynamic configuration even though its composite inner barrel has been substantially damaged due to a blade-out event. Preferably such an improved nacelle inlet will include a minimal number of components in order to minimize weight and minimize manufacturing costs.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In one embodiment, the invention includes a nacelle inlet for an aircraft engine of a type having an engine fan case with a forward flange. The nacelle inlet can include an acoustic inner barrel having a forward edge and an aft edge, and an outer shell including a nose lip portion having a trailing inner edge and an outer barrel portion having an aft portion. The nacelle inlet can further include an aft attachment flange configured to attach the inlet to the forward flange of the engine fan case, and an aft bulkhead having an aft end and connecting the outer barrel portion of the outer shell to the aft attachment flange. The forward edge of the acoustic inner barrel can be connected to the trailing inner edge of the nose lip portion, and the aft portion of the inner barrel can be attached to the aft attachment flange.

In another embodiment, the invention includes a nacelle for an aircraft engine of a type having a fan case. The nacelle can include an inlet portion having an acoustic inner barrel, an outer shell including a nose lip portion and an outer barrel portion, and a mounting means for mounting the inlet portion to the fan case. The mounting means can provide a load path from an aft portion of the outer shell to the fan case through the mounting means such that no substantial portion of the load path passes through the acoustic inner barrel.

In a further embodiment, an aircraft engine nacelle can include an inlet portion having an outer shell with a nose lip portion and an outer barrel portion. The inlet portion can further include an inner barrel, an aft bulkhead, and an aft

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mounting flange. The outer barrel can be connected to the aft bulkhead by a first connection, the aft bulk head can be connected to the aft mounting flange by a second connection, and the inner barrel can be connected to the mounting flange by a third connection. The second connection can be separate from the third connection.

These and other aspects of the invention will be understood from a reading of the following detailed description together with the drawings.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a turbofan aircraft engine having a nacelle with a typical prior art inlet portion.

FIG. 1B is a cross sectional view of the prior art nacelle inlet portion shown in FIG. 1A.

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of one embodiment of a nacelle inlet portion according to the invention.

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a nacelle inlet portion according to the invention.

FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of an additional embodiment of a nacelle inlet portion according to the invention.

FIG. 5A is a cross sectional view of a form tool for producing an outer shell of a nacelle inlet.

FIG. 5B is a cross-sectional view of a portion of the tool shown in FIG. 5A.

FIG. 5C is a cross sectional view of another form tool for producing an outer shell of a nacelle inlet.

FIG. 6 is a longitudinal cross section of a segmented inner barrel.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a segmented inner barrel.

FIG. 8 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of a longitudinal joint between segments of an inner barrel.

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a segmented inner barrel.

FIG. 10 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of another longitudinal joint between segments of an inner barrel.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A cross section of one embodiment of a nacelle inlet portion **200** according to the invention is shown in FIG. 2. In this embodiment, the inlet portion **200** includes an outer shell **204** having a rounded nose lip portion **223**, an outer barrel portion **225**, and an aft bulkhead portion **227**. In FIG. 2, the rounded nose lip portion **223** extends from an inner trailing edge **221** at point "A" to a point "B," the outer barrel portion **225** extends between point "B" and point "C," and the aft bulkhead portion **227** extends between point "C" and a trailing edge **229** at point "D." In the embodiment shown in FIG. 2, the outer shell **204** can be constructed of a continuous piece of material that extends between points "A" and "D." The outer shell **204** preferably has a contoured shape that facilitates laminar airflow and minimizes aerodynamic drag. The outer shell **204** can be constructed in a single piece that circumferentially extends a full 360 degrees around the nacelle inlet portion **200**, or the outer shell **204** can be constructed in two or more circumferential segments joined together along longitudinal joints (not shown in the drawings). In one embodiment, the outer shell **204** is formed from a graphite composite. Such a graphite composite may be formed by layering sheets of a resin impregnated graphite fabric on a contoured forming tool, and then bagging and-curing the layered fabric and tool in an autoclave in a manner known in the art. Alternatively, the



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outer shell **204** may be formed from sheet metal, such as aluminum, such as by stretch forming, spin forming, or the like.

As shown in FIG. 2, the nacelle inlet portion **200** can include an acoustically treated composite inner barrel **202**. The inner barrel **202** can be either a one-piece **360** degree structure, or can include a plurality of joined circumferential segments. The inner barrel **202** can include a honeycomb core **210** sandwiched between a perforated composite inner skin **212** and an imperforate composite outer skin **214**. The manufacture of such an acoustically treated composite inner barrel **202** is known to those skilled in the art. As shown in FIG. 2, the inner barrel **202** can include a forward flange **216** for connecting the inner barrel **202** to the inner trailing edge **221** of the nose lip portion **223** of the outer shell **204**. The forward flange **216** of the inner barrel **202** can be attached to the inner trailing edge **221** of the outer shell **204** by a plurality of circumferentially spaced fasteners **230**, such as rivets or the like. As shown in FIG. 2, the forward flange **216** of the inner barrel **202** and the trailing edge **221** of the nose lip portion **223** of the outer shell **204** can be configured to provide a substantially continuous aerodynamic surface along their juncture at point "A."

One or more circumferential stiffeners **285** can be attached along the inner surface of the outer barrel portion **225** in order to stiffen the outer barrel portion **225** and maintain its aerodynamic shape. The circumferential stiffeners **285** can be attached to the outer barrel portion **225** with adhesive and/or fasteners, such as rivets, for example. Alternatively, when the outer shell **204** is metal, the stiffeners **285** can be attached by welding. As shown in FIG. 2, the nacelle inlet **200** can include a forward bulkhead **260** that extends between the inner trailing edge **221** of the nose lip portion **223** at point "A" and the transition between the nose lip portion **223** and the outer barrel portion **225** at point "B." The forward bulkhead **260** can be formed of aluminum, titanium or another suitable material. The forward bulkhead **260** combines with nose lip portion **223** to form a D-channel **270**. Heated air can be forced through the D-channel **270** in a known manner to prevent or eliminate ice formations on the outer surface of the nose lip portion **223**.

As shown in FIG. 2, the aft bulkhead portion **227** of the outer shell **204** can extend radially inwardly and rearwardly from an aft edge (point "C") of the outer barrel portion **225**, and can include a rearwardly extending trailing edge **229**. The trailing edge **229** of the aft bulkhead portion **227** can be configured for connection to an aft portion **218** of the inner barrel **202** and for connection to a mounting flange **250**. In the embodiment shown, the trailing edge **229** of the aft bulkhead portion **227** can have a substantially cylindrical shape. The mounting flange **250** can be configured for fastening the nacelle inlet **200** to a forward flange of a fan case (not shown), and can include a circle of bolt holes corresponding to a matching circle of bolt holes in the fan case (not shown in FIG. 2). In the embodiment shown in FIG. 2, the mounting flange **250**, the trailing edge **229** of the aft bulkhead portion **227** and the aft portion **218** of the outer skin **214** of the inner barrel **202** overlap or underlap each other, and are secured together by a plurality of circumferentially spaced fasteners **252**, such as rivets, bolts, or the like. As also shown in FIG. 2, the mounting flange **250** can also be directly fastened to the aft bulkhead portion **227** by another plurality of circumferentially spaced fasteners **254**, such as rivets, bolts, or the like.

Unlike prior nacelle inlet designs, the mounting flange **250** can be directly connected to the aft bulkhead portion **227** of the outer shell **204** rather than to only the inner barrel **202**, and thus, the outer shell **204** is directly supported by an associated

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fan case when the mounting flange **250** is bolted to the fan case. Accordingly, a direct load path is provided from the outer shell **204** to a supporting fan case whereby loads on the outer shell **204** can be transmitted to the fan case without having to pass through the inner barrel **202**. This direct load path ensures that the structural integrity and stability of the nacelle inlet **200** can be maintained even though the structural integrity of the inner barrel **202** may be compromised as the result of a blade-out event. In other words, by providing a direct connection between the outer shell **204** and a supporting fan case that is independent from a connection between the inner barrel **202** and the fan case, the strength, rigidity and stability of the nacelle inlet **200** does not substantially depend upon the structural integrity of the inner barrel **202**. Accordingly, the nacelle inlet **200** can support the fly-home capability of an aircraft despite substantial damage to its inner barrel **202** due to a blade-out incident. In addition, by providing a direct load path from the outer shell **204** to a supporting fan case, loads on the nacelle inlet **200** can be transmitted to the fan case without substantial stress on the inner barrel **202**, thereby reducing the likelihood that damage to the inner barrel **202** will propagate.

Furthermore, in contrast to a prior art nacelle inlet **24** like that shown in FIG. 1B and discussed above that employs rivets **47** to secure its nose lip **28** to its outer barrel **32**, the one-piece outer shell **204** of the nacelle inlet **200** can be devoid of such fasteners. This elimination of fasteners along the outer surfaces of the nose lip **223** and outer barrel **225** enhances laminar air flow over the outer shell **204** and reduces aerodynamic drag on the nacelle inlet **200**.

A cross section of a second embodiment of a nacelle inlet **300** according to the invention is shown in FIG. 3. In this embodiment, the nacelle inlet **300** includes an acoustically treated inner barrel **302**, an outer shell **304**, and an aft bulkhead **390**. The outer shell **304** can include a nose lip portion **323** and an outer barrel portion **325**. The nose lip portion **323** can include a trailing edge **306** that connects to a forward flange **316** on the inner barrel **302**. The aft bulkhead **390** connects an aft portion of the outer shell **304** to a mounting flange **350**. In one embodiment, the connection between the aft bulkhead **390** and the mounting flange **350** includes a plurality of circumferentially spaced rivets **397**, or the like. As shown in FIG. 3, the aft bulkhead **390** can be connected to the aft edge of the outer barrel portion **325** of the outer shell **304** by a connecting ring **380** which can have a substantially T-shaped cross section. The aft bulkhead **390** and the outer barrel portion **325** can be connected to the connecting ring **380** by pluralities of circumferentially spaced fasteners, such as rivets, bolts or the like.

The mounting flange **350** can be secured to an aft portion **318** of the inner barrel **302** using rivets **399**, bolts, or other fastening means. The acoustically treated inner barrel **302** can be substantially like the composite inner barrel **202** described above. As shown in FIG. 3, at least a portion **320** of the acoustically treated inner barrel **302** can extend aft of the mounting flange **350** in order to provide acoustic treatment to a forward portion of a mating fan case (not shown in FIG. 3).

The outer shell **304** can be constructed of a composite material using known methods, or can be spin formed or stretch formed from sheet metal, such as aluminum. The outer shell **304** can be constructed in one piece, or can be formed in two or more circumferential segments. As shown in FIG. 3, the aft bulkhead **390** can be canted or inclined in a forward and outward direction such that the aft bulkhead **390** has a generally frusto-conical shape. A frusto-conically shaped aft bulkhead **390** has greater inherent stiffness than the substantially planar aft bulkhead **36** shown in FIG. 1B, for example,

due to its three dimensional shape and curvature. Due to such greater rigidity, the frusto-conically shaped aft bulkhead 390 is less likely to flex under applied loads than the more flexible planar bulkhead 36, and is better able to react and directly transfer loads between the mounting flange 350 and the outer barrel portion 325. In addition, the forward inclination of the aft bulkhead 390 permits the bulkhead 390 to at least partially transmit loads between the mounting flange 350 and the outer barrel portion 325 in tension or compression, rather than primarily in shear and bending. As a consequence, following structural damage to the inner barrel 302 due to a fan blade-out event, undamaged portions of the structure can transmit loads and retain sufficient structural stability to maintain a satisfactory inlet configuration and minimize the propagation of damage, thereby permitting an aircraft to safely fly home.

A cross section of a third embodiment of a nacelle inlet 400 according to the invention is shown in FIG. 4. The nacelle inlet 400 can include an outer shell 404 and an aft bulkhead 490 that are substantially similar to the outer shell 304 and aft bulkhead 390 described above. In this embodiment, however, the mounting flange 491 is integrally formed as part of the composite outer skin 710 of the inner barrel 700. The aft bulkhead 490 can be connected to the integral mounting flange 491 by a bracket 492 and a plurality of fasteners 497, such as rivets, bolts, or the like. As shown in FIG. 4, a forward edge of the inner barrel 700 can be joined to an interior trailing edge 421 of the outer shell 404 by a substantially Z-shaped bracket 427 and pluralities of fasteners 402, such as rivets or the like. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 4, the inner barrel 700 can be constructed in a plurality of segments joined together along longitudinally extending flanges 750, for example. Alternatively, the inner barrel 700 can be constructed as a one-piece, non-segmented barrel.

FIGS. 5A and 5B show tooling which can be used to form a composite outer shell 204 having an integral aft bulkhead portion 227 like that described above and shown in FIG. 2. FIG. 5A shows a cross sectional view of a 360° lay-up tool 900. The tool 900 can include a forward tool portion 904, an aft bulkhead tool portion 920, and a break-away ring tool portion 940. The forward tool portion 904 can include a front flange 906, a rounded nose lip portion 910, an outer barrel portion 912, and an aft attach flange 914. A front flange 906 can be located at a free forward end 905 of the forward tool portion 904. The nose lip portion 910 can forwardly extend (in the direction "F") from the front attach flange 906 to a forwardmost point 907 of the forward tool portion 904, and then rearwardly extend to the outer barrel portion 912. The outer barrel portion 912 can extend rearwardly from the nose lip portion 910 to an aft end 911 of the forward tool portion 904. The aft flange 914 outwardly extends from the outer barrel portion 912. Thus, the forward tool's nose lip portion 910 and outer barrel portion 912 are shaped similarly to the nose lip portion 223 and outer barrel portion 225, respectively, of the outer barrel 204 described above and shown in FIG. 2.

As shown in FIG. 5A, the forward tool portion 904 can be formed from a plurality of circumferential segments 903a, 903b which can be detachably secured together. In this embodiment, there are three 120 degree circumferential segments (only two segments 903a, 903b are shown), though more or fewer segments can be used. Thus, the front flange 906 and the aft flange 914 can be formed from a plurality of forward end flange segments 913 and aft flange segments 917, respectively. First and second axially extending flanges 919, 921 can extend between the forward end flange segment 913 and the aft flange segment 917, and can be provided at opposite side edges of each tool portion segment 903a, 903b. The

first axially extending flange 919 on one tool portion segment 903a can be detachably secured to the second axially extending attach flange 921 of an adjacent tool segment 903b to form axially extending flange joints 999. Adjacent first and second axially extending flanges 919, 921 can be secured together with bolts or other suitable fasteners.

The aft bulkhead tool portion 920 shown in FIG. 5A includes a front attach flange 922, a canted portion 924 extending aft of the front attach flange 922, and an aft end flange 926 extending from the canted portion 924. The forward tool's aft attach flange 914 can be detachably secured to the aft bulkhead tool's front attach flange 922 via bolts or other fasteners, for example. The canted portion 924 of the aft bulkhead tool portion 920 is shaped similarly to the aft bulkhead portion 227 of an outer shell 204 (see FIG. 2), and can be used to form the outer shell's aft bulkhead portion 227. Although shown as a single, unitary piece, the aft bulkhead tool portion 920 can be formed from a plurality of circumferential segments.

As also shown in FIGS. 5A and 5B, the tool assembly 900 can further include a break-away tool portion or ring 940 for forming an inner trailing edge 221 of an outer shell 204 like that shown in FIG. 2. The break-away tool portion 940 can be a one-piece ring (not shown in FIG. 5A) if a sufficient negative draft angle or set-back feature is provided in the front attachment leg inner trailing edge 221 of the laid-up outer shell 204 to allow removal of the of the laid-up outer shell 204 from the front tool portion 904. Otherwise, the break-away tool portion 940 can be a segmented ring like that shown in FIG. 5A and can include separable ring segments 931 to allow the segments 931 to be individually removed prior to removing a laid-up outer shell 204 (not shown) from the forward tool portion 904. The break-away tool portion 940 can be detachably secured to the front attach flange 906 using fasteners (not shown). As shown in FIG. 5B, the break-away tool portion 940 can be radially offset from the front attach flange 906 for forming an inner trailing edge 221.

According to one embodiment, a composite lay-up can be made within the tool 900 to make a continuous composite outer shell 204 like that shown FIG. 2, for example. Alternatively, circumferential shell segments can be laid-up individually on separate tool portions and/or tool segments and assembled to form a complete outer shell 204. According to another embodiment, outer shell segments can be partially laid-up on separate tool portions and/or tool segments, and the tool portions/tool segments can then be assembled together and lap-seams applied to bond the outer shell segments together to form a complete outer shell 204. Once an outer shell 204 has cured in the tool assembly 900, the forward tool 904, the aft bulkhead tool 920, the break-away ring tool 940, and other tool segments such as the forward tool segments 905 and the break-away ring tool segments 931, can be separated to facilitate removal of a cured outer shell 204 from the tools 904, 920, 940. One of ordinary skill in the art would understand how to manufacture an outer shell in the disclosed lay-up tool 900.

In some embodiments, the trailing inside portion of a nose lip portion of an outer shell can be extended farther aftward than the nose lip portions 223, 323, 423 shown in FIGS. 2-4. In such a case, a lay-up tool 1000 like that shown in FIG. 5C can be used. The tool 1000 can be substantially similar to the tool 900 shown in FIG. 5A, and like components shown in FIGS. 5A and 5C have like reference numerals. Unlike the tool 900 described above, however, the tool 1000 does not include an aft bulkhead tool 920 or a break-away tool portion 940. As shown in FIG. 5C, the tool 1000 can include a nose lip extension tool portion 960 for forming an extended nose lip

portion. The nose lip extension tool portion **960** can include a front attach flange **962**, an axially extending portion **964** extending rearwardly from the front attach flange **962**, and an aft end flange **966** extending transversely from the axially extending portion **964**. The front attach flange **906** of the forward tool **904** can be detachably secured to the front attach flange **962** of the nose lip extension tool portion **960** using fasteners **968**, for example. The nose lip extension tool portion **960** can be substituted for the break-away tool portion **940** in previously described tool **900** for forming an outer shell having both an aft bulkhead portion and an extended nose lip portion. The lay-up process for forming a composite outer shell using the lay-up tool **1000** can be substantially similar to that discussed above with respect to tool **900** shown in FIGS. **5A** and **5B**.

FIG. **6** shows a cross-sectional view of one embodiment a circumferentially segmented acoustic inner barrel **700** of a type that can be employed in conjunction with a nacelle inlet **400** like that described above and shown in FIG. **4**, for example. As shown in FIG. **6**, the circumferentially segmented acoustic inner barrel **700** can include three circumferential segments **704**, **706**, **708**. Alternatively, a circumferentially segmented acoustic inner barrel can include a different number of circumferential segments, such as two, four, or more. Each circumferential end of a circumferential segment **704**, **706**, **708** is provided with a pair of radially outwardly projecting flanges **750**, **751** that extend in a longitudinal direction substantially entirely along the length of the acoustic inner barrel **700**. Adjacent circumferential segments mate along a longitudinal splice **780** where their radially outwardly projecting flanges **750**, **751** oppose one another.

As shown in FIG. **7**, each circumferential segment of the acoustic inner barrel **700** can include an upstanding attachment flange **790** at its aft end. The upstanding attachment flange **790** can be formed from a plurality of circumferential upstanding attachment flange segments **791**, **793**, **795**, and can be machined with one or more circumferentially spaced apart bolt holes for attachment to a forward flange of an engine fan case (not shown). Circumferentially facing flanges **751**, **753** of adjacent circumferential segments can extend substantially along the length of the acoustic inner barrel **700**, and can be secured to a mating flange by a plurality of spaced fasteners **792**.

FIG. **8** shows a detailed view of a cross-section of one embodiment of a longitudinal splice joint **780** which can be used to join the longitudinal edges of two adjacent inner barrel segments, such as segments **704** and **706**, for example. In one embodiment, each circumferential segment **704**, **706** includes an inner skin **707**, an acoustic core **709**, and an outer skin **710**. As shown in FIG. **8**, the outer skin **710** can include a thickened portion **712** in the region where the two circumferential segments **704**, **706** meet at the splice **780**. As shown in FIG. **8**, facing inner skin portions **714**, **715** of adjacent segments **704**, **706** can be wrapped around the edges of their core sections **709** such that they extend into the splice joint **780**. Additional plies of a prepreg fabric can be provided on the outer shell **710** at the circumferential edges of each segment **704**, **706** to form the thickened regions **712** and facing flanges **750**, **751**. The segments **704**, **706** can then be cured in an autoclave using known methods. When assembled to form a complete inner barrel **700**, the effective gap **730** between the opposed inner skin portions **714**, **715** (i.e., the acoustical discontinuity) can have an acoustically negligible width, designated **P1**. In one embodiment, the gap width **P1** is less than or equal to approximately 0.2 inches, or about 5 mm. Providing such a minimal acoustic splice effectively creates the acoustic benefits of a continuous 360° one-piece acoustic

inner barrel, while retaining the damage propagation stop features of a circumferentially segmented inner barrel. Alternatively, the inner barrel **700** can be assembled by bonding an inner skin **707**, cellular core **709** and outer skin **710** to form an integral unit having no longitudinal joints.

FIG. **9** shows a perspective view of another embodiment of a segmented inner barrel **700'**. The inner barrel **700'** includes a plurality of circumferential segments **704'**, **706'**, **708'** and is similar to the inner barrel **700** described above except the inner barrel **700'** includes a reduced diameter aft end portion **794** formed from the aft ends **791**, **793**, **799** of the circumferential segments **704'**, **706'**, **708'**. The aft end portion **794** receives a 360-degree engine attach ring **796** which helps to secure the aft ends **791**, **793**, **799** together. The engine attach ring **796** can be received over and secured to the reduced diameter portion **794** of the inner barrel **700'** using known techniques, such as by adhesives or mechanical fasteners, for example.

As described above with reference to FIG. **4**, a nacelle inlet **400** can include an outer skin **404** and an acoustic inner barrel **700** constructed from a plurality of circumferential segments **704**, **706**, **708**. Alternatively, a nacelle inlet can include an outer skin **404** and an acoustic inner barrel **700'** constructed from a plurality of circumferential segments **704'**, **706'**, **708'**. In the case of a fan blade-out event, only one of the plurality of circumferential segments **704**, **706**, **708** or **704'**, **706'**, **708'** is likely to be damaged initially, and this damage generally will not propagate to an adjacent circumferential segment due to the longitudinal discontinuities between segments. Since undamaged circumferential segments are affixed to the remaining undamaged structure, they can help augment the stability and fly-home capability of the nacelle inlet **400**.

FIG. **10** shows a cross-section of an alternative construction for a segmented inner barrel **800** having an acoustically negligible gap **P2** between two adjacent segments **804**, **805**. Each circumferential segment **804**, **805** can include a perforated inner skin **806**, an acoustic core **808**, and an imperforate outer skin **810**. As shown in the figures, the outer skin **810** can include a thickened region **812** where the two circumferential segments **804**, **805** meet. The facing inner skin portions **814**, **815** can be wrapped radially outward as shown. An acoustically negligible gap **830** of width length **P2** can exist between the inner skin portions **814**, **815**. In one embodiment, **P2** is less than or equal to 0.2 inches, or about 5 mm.

In the embodiment shown in FIG. **10**, the acoustic inner barrel **800** includes reinforcement members **850** in the form of splice plates **852** secured to the outer shell **810** by fastening members **880**. As seen in FIG. **10**, the reinforcement member **850** is attached to the barrel **800** such that an inner surface **854** of the splice plate **852** is joined to the outer surface of the outer shell **810** of the inner barrel **800**. The fastening members **880** extend transversely through the splice plate **852**, through the outer shell **810** of the inner barrel **800** and at least partially into the cellular core **808**. The splice plate **852** can be secured to the outer shell **810** by blind fasteners installed from the back side and penetrating the thickened portion **812** of the outer shell **810**. The fastening members **880** occupy only a small amount of the cross-sectional area of the cellular core **810** and do not extend to or block perforations in the inner skin **806** of the inner barrel **800**. Thus, such a spliced connection will not detrimentally affect the acoustic performance of the barrel **800**.

The circumferentially segmented acoustic inner barrel **800** can be used in a manner similar to the circumferentially segmented acoustic inner barrel **700**, **700'** described above. The circumferentially segmented acoustic inner barrel **800**

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can help provide a nacelle inlet **400** with fly-home capability in addition to that provided by other improvements to the nacelle inlet **400**.

While the present invention has been described herein above in connection with a plurality of aspects and embodiments, it is understood that these aspects and embodiments were presented by way of example with no intention of limiting the invention. Accordingly, the present invention should not be limited to any specific embodiment or aspect, but rather construed in breadth and broad scope in accordance with the recitation of the claims appended hereto.

What is claimed is:

1. A nacelle inlet portion comprising:  
an annular inner barrel having a forward flange and an aft portion located farther aft than the forward flange; and  
a single piece outer shell having a rounded nose lip portion and being attached to the forward flange and to the aft portion  
wherein the single piece outer shell forms an outer barrel portion and an aft bulkhead, wherein the aft bulkhead is formed between the outer barrel portion and the aft portion of the annular inner barrel,  
wherein the aft bulkhead extends radially inwardly and rearwardly from an aft edge point of the outer barrel portion to the aft portion of the annular inner barrel,  
wherein the single piece outer shell transitions continuously to form the rounded nose lip portion, aft bulkhead, and outer barrel portion, and  
wherein the single piece outer shell is formed by spin forming.
2. A nacelle inlet portion as in claim 1, wherein the outer shell comprises a plurality of joined circumferential segments.
3. A nacelle inlet portion as in claim 1, wherein the nose lip portion forms two or more annular segments.
4. A nacelle inlet portion as in claim 1, wherein the inner barrel is a one-piece 360 degree structure.
5. A nacelle inlet portion as in claim 1, wherein the inner barrel comprises a plurality of joined circumferential segments.

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6. A nacelle inlet portion as in claim 1, wherein the inner barrel comprises a perforated inner skin and an imperforate outer skin.

7. A nacelle inlet portion as in claim 6 further comprising a honeycomb core, the honeycomb core being disposed between the inner skin and the outer skin.

8. A nacelle comprising:

- an inner barrel having a forward flange and an aft portion located farther aft than the forward flange;
- a single piece outer shell forming an outer barrel portion and an aft bulkhead;
- the aft bulkhead having a trailing edge attached to the aft portion of the inner barrel; and
- the single piece outer shell having a rounded nose lip portion and being attached to the forward flange of the inner barrel wherein the single piece outer shell is formed by spin forming.

9. A nacelle as in claim 8, wherein the outer shell comprises a plurality of joined circumferential segments.

10. A nacelle as in claim 8, wherein the inner barrel comprises a perforated inner skin and an imperforate outer skin.

11. A nacelle as in claim 10 further comprising a honeycomb core, the honeycomb core being disposed between the inner skin and the outer skin.

12. A nacelle comprising:

- an inner barrel having a forward flange and an aft portion;
- a single piece outer shell forming an outer barrel portion and an aft bulkhead;
- the aft bulkhead being disposed entirely aft of the forward flange and having a trailing edge attached to the aft portion of the inner barrel; and
- the single piece outer shell having a rounded nose lip portion and being attached to the forward flange of the inner barrel wherein the single piece outer shell is formed by spin forming.

13. A nacelle as in claim 12, wherein at least a portion of the inner barrel is acoustically treated.

\* \* \* \* \*